

1. (Original) An apparatus comprising:
  - a first signal path comprising:
    - a first despreaders;
    - a second despreaders coupled to the first despreaders;
    - a first de-interleaver coupled to the second despreaders;
    - a first branch metric determiner coupled to the first de-interleaver,wherein the first branch metric determiner outputs first branch metrics;
  - a second signal path comprising:
    - a third despreaders;
    - a fourth despreaders coupled to the third despreaders;
    - a second de-interleaver coupled to the fourth despreaders;
    - a second branch metric determiner coupled to the second de-interleaver, wherein the second branch metric determiner outputs second branch metrics; and
  - a combiner having the first and the second branch metrics as an input and outputting combined branch metrics.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first despreaders despreads data transmitted from a first base station.
3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the third despreaders despreads data transmitted from a second base station.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a first convolutional encoding scheme.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the second branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a second convolutional encoding scheme.
6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
  - a first branch metric generator having a first plurality of symbols that are encoded at a first encoding rate as an input and outputting first branch metrics for the first plurality of symbols;

a second branch metric generator having a second plurality of symbols that are encoded at a second encoding rate as an input and outputting second branch metrics for the second plurality of symbols; and

a combiner having the first and the second branch metrics as an input and outputting combined branch metrics.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first plurality of symbols differ in number from the second plurality of symbols.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first plurality of symbols where transmitted by a first base station and the second plurality of symbols where transmitted by a second base station.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising:

a logic unit having the first and the second plurality of symbols as an input and outputting the symbols with zeros inserted at various time periods.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for receiving a plurality of signals, wherein each signal of the plurality of signals employs a different encoding rate comprising the steps of:

receiving a first plurality of symbols that are encoded at a first encoded rate;

generating first branch metrics for the first plurality of symbols;

receiving a second plurality of symbols that are encoded at a second encoded rate;

generating second branch metrics for the second plurality of symbols; and

combining the first and the second branch metrics.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 ~~wherein the step of receiving the first plurality of symbols comprises the step of receiving the first plurality of symbols, wherein the first plurality of symbols where generated utilizing a first convolutional encoding scheme and~~ are transmitted by a first base station.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 ~~wherein the step of receiving the second plurality of symbols comprises the step of receiving the second plurality of symbols~~, wherein the second plurality of symbols ~~where generated utilizing a second convolutional encoding scheme and~~ are transmitted by a second base station.